Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

May 16 to 31, 2021

DIVERSITY DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Blue Mountains Elk: Biologist Moore has worked with numerous DFW staff members from the Science and Game Divisions to develop the Blue Mountains Elk Herd: At-Risk Assessment. This document is near completion and will determine if the Blue Mountains elk herd should be designated "At-Risk" as defined by WDFW's Game Management Plan. Additionally, it will evaluate current data on survival, potential limiting factors for this population, and proposed management actions.

To inform management alternatives of the At-Risk Assessment, Biologist Moore has been working with Biologists Wik and Vekasy, to implement an elk calf survival monitoring project in the Blue Mountains. The capture and collaring portion of this project is near completion. Ground efforts started on May 17 with hopes to capture calves shortly after birth. This strategy was successful, with 24% of our captures being less than two days old. Aerial captures were initiated on June 1 and filled out our sample to 104 elk calves within GMUs 162, 166, and 175. Monitoring will continue through March of 2022 and will provide survival and cause of mortality data for the northern portion of the Blue Mountains elk herd.

Calf captured during the ground effort in GMU 175 and wearing an expandable GPS neck collar. Collars will provide daily locations and notification of mortality – Photo by Paul Wik

HUNTER EDUCATION

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nothing for this installment.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Planning: The South Puget Sound Wildlife Area draft management plan was distributed to planning team members for review. The revised plan will be sent to the Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) for review and comment. The next WAAC meeting is scheduled on June 29 and we are on target to have State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) 30-day review this summer.

Skagit Wildlife Area Planning: A Skagit Wildlife Area planning team meeting was held on May 12. The planning process was placed on hold for about a year due to the Island Unit alternatives analysis and public outreach process. Plan writing will begin in June, and we expect a draft plan by late summer. Several work group meetings have been scheduled to further develop the goals and objectives.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Wildlife Area Planning Framework: The Wildlife Area Planning framework is being updated. Updates include new policies, rules, strategic plan, recreation planning, new agency initiatives, and wildlife area planning refinements. A final version is expected to be posted on the website in June.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Grizzly Bear Monitoring: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock set up a grizzly bear hair corral in the Wedge in the vicinity of grizzly bear tracks were observed by Wolf Biologist Spence.

Common Loon Surveys: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock completed multiple common loon surveys. The surveys were conducted on lakes without previous nesting activity. Some loons were observed, but no new nesting activity was documented.

View from the loon survey watercraft of Davis Lake in Pend Oreille County

Ferruginous Hawk Monitoring: Wildlife Biologists Atamian and Lowe completed the first round of productivity checks on the active ferruginous hawk territories in the district. Four of the five nests that were active at the last check were still active, with three nests having visible chicks ranging from 19-24 days old. In the fourth active nest the female was still sitting, meaning either there are still eggs or the hatchlings are quite young.

Three ferruginous hawk chicks roughly 21 days old – nest in Lincoln County

Western Bumble Bee Survey: Wildlife Biologists Atamian and Lowe completed the first round of surveys in the two western bumble bee grid cells in the district. Although no western bumble bees were detected in either cell, Nevada and yellow bumble bees were captured in one cell. Flower sources appear scarcer this year and are perhaps already on their way out.

Nevada bumble bee (L) and yellow bumble bee (R) captured at survey grid cell in Whitman County

Harlequin Duck Survey: Biologist Turnock participated in harlequin duck surveys near Sullivan Lake with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Kalispel Natural Resource Department (KNRD). Biologist Turnock observed four male ducks in the stretch of creek he was surveying.

Three harlequin ducks rest on a log

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area Big Horn Sheep: Biologist Dingman located a bighorn sheep and submitted locations using Survey123. Seven lambs have hit the ground and two have already been lost. Dingman and Biologist Vekasy were able to get a lamb freed that had gotten his leg hung up in a barbed wire boundary fence. The lamb sustained some injuries to the front leg, and it is unknown if he will survive.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Black Bear Inspections: Wildlife Biologists Prince, Turnock, Atamian, and Lowe have inspected multiple black bear pelts for successful special permit holders. Atamian and Lowe's inspections have all been male bears so far.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Black Bear and Elk Fence at Wooten Wildlife Area: Dingman met Officer Delp in Dayton on Tuesday with the culvert bear trap so he could set it at a residence up the North Touchet where a bear killed a pet goat. Kenny Bott from the U.S. Forest Service stopped by Headquarters to let Dingman know that a bear was opening coolers in the Tucannon Campground on Tuesday night. Dingman passed the information along to enforcement. On Wednesday morning, a two-year-old black bear was just north of Headquarters, trying to get through the elk fence. Dingman, Intern Hatley, and Veterinarian Christensen opened the gate and cut a hole in the elk fence so the bear could get through. The bear eventually found the gate through the fence, and Dingman, Natural Resource Worker Jensen, and Intern Hatley repaired the hole that was cut in the elk fence.

Black bear north of W.T. Wooten Headquarters trying to find its way through the elk fence

4) <u>Conserving Natural Landscapes</u>

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Boundary Fence Project: The fence project near Grouse Creek on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area recently had its fourth and final crew member hired by WDFW. The recruitment process has been ongoing since the end of January, and we now have a full crew. Great progress is being made on the fence with staff members now working on the west side of Grouse Creek.

Line clearing and brace construction at Grouse Creek on the 4-O Ranch WLA, and some completed fence at the 4-O Ranch WLA

Grouse Flats RX Fire project: WDFW crews have wrapped up burning operations at the Grouse Flats Wildlife Area and have been in the monitoring phase, making sure there is not any reignition. Overall, this was a good project. Elk are moving back into burned areas and heavily moving/feeding throughout the black and fire lined areas. The burn team will have to return to the site to roll up over 25,000 feet of hose used around the fire lines.

Grouse Flats RX fire project

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Grazing permits: WDFW issued a temporary grazing permit to Tom Hendrickson to use the mouth of the Dry Gulch area for up to two weeks. Tom used the site for about a week due to difficulties holding livestock on WDFW land related to the severe drought we are now experiencing.

Livestock on WDFW land at Dry Gulch

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Grazing Permits: Livestock are currently turned out at both permit sites on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area. Lower elevation pastures on the east permit are rapidly drying up and cows have been moved to higher elevation sites. Livestock on the west permit site were recently turned out and are widely scattered about.

Livestock on the west permit site on the 4-O Ranch WLA

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Bear Spray Training: Wildlife Biologist Prince and Conflict Specialist Bennett assisted WSU Extension staff members with small group bear spray instruction. Each participant was allowed to practice spraying inert bear spray and then given a free can of bear spray.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nesting Burrowing Owls Monitored at Artificial Burrows Near Tri-Cities: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and Scientific Technicians Merluccio and Martenson conducted nest checks at burrow sites for burrowing owls. Trained volunteers are also assisting to monitor some installed burrows. Nest checks identify site occupancy and breeding status and are used to determine a timeline for banding young owls later in the season. Most pair are raising clutches of up to 10 young owls and banding of young is underway. The data is combined with partners regionally as part of a long-term project initiated by the Global Owl Project in Oregon.

Recently banded adult burrowing owl looks back from the entrance tube of the artificial burrow created for the nesting owls

Nesting Western Screech Owls: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Wascisin revisited a wood nest box that had an adult Western screech owl sitting on eggs in it this past March at the Johnson Wetland of the Sunnyside Unit. The picture below is what she found recently.

New friends; fledgling Western screech owls in a wood duck nest box at the Johnson Wetland area – Photo by Sarah Wascisin

Carcass Sanitation: District 8 Assistant Wildlife Biologist B. Oates hosted a meeting among local the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and WDFW staff members to discuss the growing concern of carcass dumping near the southern border of the Naneum State Forest, which attracts wolves to livestock areas and increases the likelihood of wolf-livestock conflict. WDFW staff members are developing signs to post at known hotspots to discourage the activity and direct it to the appropriate locations; however, signs will only do so much to abate the issue. Constructing a carcass-composting facility has been proposed to offer a more viable alternative to dumping carcasses on public land, and several local and regional non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have expressed interest in providing financial and logistical support. Meetings are ongoing to discuss the location, design, maintenance, and cost-sharing of the facility.

Bat Monitoring: District 8 Assistant Wildlife Biologist B. Oates assisted White-nose Syndrome Bat Coordinator A. Tobin with white-nose syndrome (WNS) surveillance efforts at a decommissioned U.S. Forest Service property located east of White Pass along Highway 12. Tarps were laid out underneath known roosting areas to collect bat guano, which will be retrieved in approximately one month to test for presence of the fungal disease.

Collared Deer Mortality: District 8 Assistant Wildlife Biologist B. Oates conducted a necropsy of a GPS-collared mule deer near the headwaters of Naneum Creek in the Wenatchee Mountains. The doe had migrated from her winter range on the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area to her typical summer range and was killed by a cougar that dragged the carcass into the cover of a regenerating forest stand to feed and cache the remains.

The pictures above show the cache site created by the cougar (left), and what remained of the deer (right) after being uncovered

Bumble Bee Survey: District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz conducted bumble bee surveys in three cells along the border of Yakima, Klickitat, and Benton counties. Two of the cells were selected for "grassland" habitat, but area is >90% wheatfield. Google Earth was used to selected areas that hadn't been farmed. A small tract of intact shrub-steppe was found in the one "shrub" cell. No bumble bees were found in any of the three cells.

Pictures of the majority of selected "grassland" habitat

Raven Depredation Project: Technician Leuck and District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz continued to work on the Yakima Training Center (YTC) to reduce raven densities in hopes of benefiting Sage Grouse. Not many ravens have been successful nesting this year in the main Sage Grouse nesting area. There is only one remaining accessible nest that hasn't been removed.

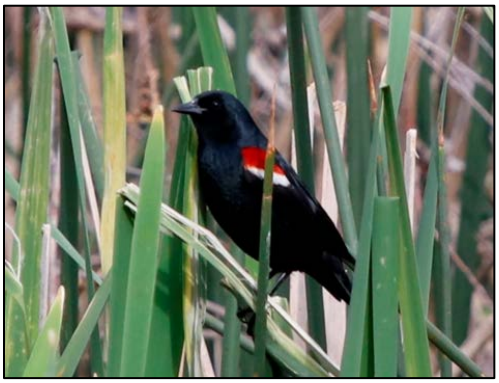
The lack of good grouse habitat on YTC is becoming evident. In 2020, the Taylor Pond fire burned a good chunk of the remaining YTC sage grouse habitat. Lack of moisture since the fire and strong winds have diminished chances of restoration success as sand dunes are forming.

A portion of The 2020 Taylor Pond Fire on YTC

Bumble Bee Survey Preparations Underway: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra attended trainings and ordered supplies for participation in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) Bumblebee survey which WDFW is contracted to assist in completion. Fidorra and biologists across the state will be sampling and photographing bumblebees this summer to gather population and distribution information for several species, including four Washington Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 3 Prepares First Wildlife Viewing Private Lands Access Site: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with Region 3 Private Lands biologists on identifying two wildlife viewing sites in Franklin County. The sites will provide viewing access to one of the state's few known tricolored blackbird colonies, as well as migrant birds in spring and fall. Males of this species have a striking clean white border to their red shoulders compared to the yellow-orange border of the more common red-winged blackbird. The species is globally endangered and mostly resides in California with isolated breeding sites in remote wetlands of eastern Washington and Oregon. Both sites should be enrolled into a payable Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) contract and will begin July 1, 2021. Both WDFW and the landowners are eager to see how well the program works.



A male tricolored blackbird at a breeding site in Franklin County, WA

Landowner Hunting Permit Meeting: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand, Region 3 Private Land Biologist Hulett, and District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra met with representatives of the Silver Dollar Association to discuss new ownerships, contract development, property signage, and hunting operations. The landowners brought up some issues with the program from the previous year (i.e., receiving hunting permits the day before the season) and discussed options for changing permit numbers in future years. Hulett revised contracts and program boundaries in preparation for the upcoming three years.

Wildhorse Wind Farms Renews Hunting Access Agreement: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett received Puget Sound Energy – Wildhorse Wind Farms signed hunting access contract. The wind facility will be in the Hunt by Reservation program for five additional years. Furthermore, Puget Sound Energy informed Hulett that they plan on holding their annual Hunters Breakfast on October 29, 2021.

The special permit application deadline was May 26. There was the usual flurry of requests for information on special permits areas. There is obvious demand for "Quality" opportunity. The reporting data indicates roughly 45% of those purchasing an elk tag do not hunt if they aren't drawn for a special permit.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Kittitas County Elk: District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Technician Leuck hazed elk in Badger Pocket. Several local Master Hunters volunteered to also haze elk on a daily basis. Elk numbers and elk damage appears to be slowly but steadily increasing in that area. Cow elk have been seen, which is a new development.

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel replaced the panel fence across Taneum Creek. Elk were in the area and now is a good time to close the fence before more elk move into the area.

Elk on the wrong side of the Taneum Fence

Taneum Fence in winter condition to pass flows (L) and Taneum Fence with summer elk panels to prevent elk from crossing (R)

Corral Canyon Summer Bull Elk Hunt: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to monitor damage hunts and prepared and delivered additional damage prevention permits to a landowner who successfully filled his existing permits. Strong numbers of elk are leaving the Hanford National Monument for winter wheat fields on top of Rattlesnake Mountain and these permits are used to pressure elk off crops during this critical growing season.

Rattlesnake Hills Trail Cameras: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand checked on two trail cameras deployed in areas on Rattlesnake Mountain that elk have historically used to leave the Hanford Monument for winter wheat crops. New posts were installed to elevate the mounted cameras and keep elk from damaging the equipment.

Hanford Elk on private wheat fields at night

Wolf Activities: Teanaway wolves appeared to be using similar areas as last year in the pack territory. The Naneum wolves are using new areas and appear to be following livestock movements. No new conflicts have been reported during this period. Agency and producer range riders are working closely in these high use areas.

Cougar Depredation: District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel assisted Officers Peterson and Scherzinger to remove a cougar that killed two goats. The young cougar had a previous injury that caused it to have a severe limp.

Injured cougar that killed two goats

Horse Depredation: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted Wildlife Enforcement staff members with a possible depredation on an almost-one-month-old horse in the Finley area. After completing a necropsy on the colt and examining the evidence at the scene we were not able to determine what caused the death. A trail camera was deployed and captured coyotes as the only predator returning to feed on the carcass.

Sergeant Fulton inspecting horse carcass and coyote captured on camera feeding on carcass

Safety Issue: Wenas Wildlife Area staff members was informed of exposed latrine holes on the Wildlife Area. They were previously covered by reader boards that were lost in the Evan's Canyon Fire. Natural Resource Technician's Kass and Stultz flagged the holes and will return to fill them.

Latrine holes exposed by the Evan's Canyon Fire

4) <u>Conserving Natural Landscapes</u>

Recreation Damage: Manager Babik refreshed signage in Taneum reminding users not to drive through wet meadows or create ATV/bicycle racetracks that compact soils and allow for the encroachment of weeds. Dispersed camping sites were already filling up by Wednesday.

Dispersed camping in Taneum meadows

Vehicle ruts through a wet meadow in Taneum

Weed Management: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff members are winning the war against thistle at the Heart K for now. Last year Natural Resource Specialist Nass spent considerable time spraying and mowing the 3-acre field.

Heart K after herbicide application in 2020

Heart K site in June 2021; just a few Canadian Thistle plants to spot spray

Developing Restoration Plan: L.T. Murray's Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Specialist Nass worked closely with staff members from Benson Farm Inc. to develop a restoration plan for the Gress site in Taneum where ventenata is taking hold in the lower depressions. Staff members wanted to preserve the rich diversity of forbs so they developed a spraying regime that will only target the ventenata.

Spring in the L.T. Murray WLA at the Gress property

Field Restoration Project: L.T. Murray's Assistant Manager Winegeart disced a 7-acre field as part of an effort to convert the field from a pasture grass monoculture to a healthy stand of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Winegeart located a nest in the field containing five cottontail rabbits that were yet to open their eyes. Miraculously, the tractor and disc straddled the rabbits, leaving them unharmed. Winegeart meticulously reconstructed shade and cover in hopes of providing protection from the elements and predators. Unfortunately, a raven witnessed the event and removed the baby rabbits before Winegeart could complete another round in the field.

7-acre Ragland field after one pass with the disc

Cottontail rabbit

Rabbit nest

Nest robber

Continued Weed Control: The L.T. Murray's Natural Resource Technician Blore has been devoted to the Whiskey Dick targeting whitetop, knapweeds, and thistles.

Herbicide treatment

Planting Wildlife Habitat: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Rodgers and Natural Resource Technician Byers planted native shrubs in an existing habitat plot along a crop circle edge in the Windmill Ranch unit.

Newly planted Woods' rose and golden currant at the Windmill Ranch unit

Pollinator Habitat: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Rodgers planted a plot of annual sunflowers at the Windmill Ranch Headquarters to provide late summer and fall forage for wildlife, as well as a native flower mix for pollinator species.

Newly seeded food plot at the Windmill Ranch Headquarters

Windmill Ranch pollinator plot in bloom during its second growing season. Additional flower seed was planted this year as well

Invasive Weed Management: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber and Natural Resource Technician Byers continue follow up visits to areas within the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch, Hope Valley, and Esquatzel Units to monitor, map, and apply herbicide to yellow star-thistle patches. This invasive plant is common in the eastern portion of Franklin county and continues to spread to the west. Wildlife Area staff members will continue efforts to control its spread.

Yellow star-thistle at Esquatzel Unit

Wetland Management: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber had to use a skid-steer with backhoe attachment to remove woody debris placed by a local wetland engineer (beaver). The obstruction was causing flooding at the 7-acre pond within the Mesa Unit. Many types of shorebirds and waterfowl are using the site currently. The obstruction was removed, and boards replaced to maintain the water level for the birds that could be nesting in the area.

Water control structure being cleared of debris

Removing Relic Barbed Wire: Natural Resource Technician Stultz and Biologist Daling rolled and removed old barbwire from various sites off North Durr Road. The wire was previously taken down from posts and prepped to be rolled with a machine roller by Natural Resource Technician Stultz.

Barb wire rolled with machine roller and hauled off site

Campers on Wenas Wildlife Area: Wenas Wildlife Area staff members found a travel trailer parked at the parking area on North Durr Road. Wildlife Area Manager Taylor informed enforcement. The following week a second trailer showed up in the same location.

Trailers Parked at Durr Road Parking Area

Lupine regrowth in the burn area of the Evan's Canyon Fire off Durr Road

Oak Creek WLA Forest Restoration Work: Oak Creek Wildlife Area Forester Hartmann showed pre-commercial thinning units to potential contractors at Rock Creek. Hartmann also conducted cultural resource surveys with Archaeologist Major at Windy Point, and completed tree marking and cruising at Windy Point Unit 3.

Left: Marked cut trees at Windy Point Unit 3. Here a mark-cut strategy is used because relatively few trees need to be cut in this stand to meet habitat and forest health objectives. Blue paint is used to distinguish them from the orange leave trees marked in units 1 and 2 Right: Balsamroot on full display along the FS-1302 road. Spring is in full effect in the mountains!

Cougar Canyon Underburn: The final week of this period saw opportunity for the South-Central Burn Team Lead Delozier to initiate prescribed broadcast burning in the Cougar Canyon area. However, with the upcoming holiday weekend and hot windy weather in the forecast, lighting ceased on May 27 and the crews began mop up and patrol. We feel the 80+ acres burned was a success by meeting burn plan objectives. The remaining ~100 acres will be completed as weather permits but will likely not occur this spring due to rapidly increasing fire danger and the dry spring we have had to date.

Burning of the Cougar Canyon Underburn in progress

Cowiche Unit Stream Restoration: Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Mackey, Project Manager Charlet, Habitat Biologist Bartrand, Fish Biologist Divens, and Yakama Tribal fisheries staff members conducted a site visit to recently acquired lands along Cowiche Creek and Reynolds Creek of the Cowiche Unit. Initial planning efforts were discussed for stream restoration opportunities.

Just one opportunity along Cowiche Creek to plan small structures designed to reduce water velocities and re-connect water delivery and retention to associated wetlands

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Installing New Signs and Kiosks: L.T. Murray's Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Blore worked to put the finishing touches on the kiosks. They mounted new wildlife area (WLA) identification banners on the Teanaway Valley Unit kiosk. Selah High School Shop students fabricated 26 of these banners to be placed on 13 WLA kiosks. Staff members highly recommend working with these students for sign needs!

New WLA banners on Teanaway Valley Unit kiosk

L.T. Murray's Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Blore moved the green dot rules board at the Corrals parking area to a new location. Now all the information is centralized and eye catching.

Green dot rules board new location at Corrals parking area

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Loon Occupancy Survey: District Biologist C. Moore and Private Lands Biologist Wingard performed a boat-based common loon survey last week on Lake Whatcom. Conditions were perfect for the survey, allowing them to survey the entire lake. This survey is part of a larger statewide effort in coordination with the Biodiversity Research Institute, which developed the protocol for surveying and managing common loon populations in North America. Biologists from the district will survey the lake at least two more times to determine occupancy, nesting, and fledging success.

District Biologist Hamer surveyed lakes in San Juan, Island, and Snohomish counties. Although the lakes surveyed had either historic observations of breeding common loons or recent observations of non-breeding common loons, no active breeding pairs were located.

Biologists Anderson and Smith have been conducting surveys on known use/territory lakes as well as adjacent lakes in those areas suspected to be used. Smith has had a pair on Calligan (yet to establish nest but likely) and is working with a landowner to determine one individual seen on Lake Hancock (perhaps a second and nesting?). Anderson and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) biologists have had two pairs on Tolt Reservoir and have yet to establish what they are doing on the far east end and far west end of the reservoir. There is a pair on Chester Morse Reservoir, likely nesting but SPU is still monitoring that site. Smith and Tacoma Water staff members finally confirmed a pair on Green that are nesting, via joint efforts. Smith had one loon at Eagle Lake (undetermined status). Anderson surveyed Lynch Lake – no loon observed over the course of standard survey and call back attempt, but one bird seen in April in platform deployment. Smith surveyed Klaus (no loons) and Black lakes (loon came in to wail on Black), type of use undetermined at this time.

Anderson and Smith went to new site Loch Katrine and confirmed use, the individual thought to be a 2013 banded male from Calligan. It appears solo in this past survey. Banded but older type bands are quite faded so 100% identification is not possible – what has been observed fits that individual from band combos, history of this bird in immediate area, and what little washed out color that can be made out. It is likely the Calligan bird that was usurped in 2014 by a new male. The lake was very fogged in half the survey. Call back wail was given, and the bird immediately responded with hoots. The bird gave wails later in the survey (no call back by biologists past first effort in fog). We suspect this bird is looking for a mate but there are not enough loons around, so it is just occupying a nice lake. Future survey will help confirm solo status.

Loch Katrine Common Loon with bands evident (left). Loch Katrine Common Loon in fog (right). Note line of ice in background – lake largely iced out but still some. Bird was foraging under ice at times and along ice edge – Photo by C. Anderson (WDFW)

Island Marble Butterfly Surveys: District Biologist Hamer, Pollinator Specialist Potter, and Conservation Assessment Manager Cotten surveyed Island Marble Butterfly host plant abundance and occupancy on San Juan Island. Conditions for Lepidium and Sysimbrium host plants were apparently poor this year and the abundance of these species is low. However, Brassica at Eagle Cove was very abundant this year.

A patch of Brassica rapa host plants on sand bluffs at Eagle Cove, San Juan Island. B. rapa is one of just three mustard species utilized by juvenile Island Marble Butterflies

Bat Survey: Biologist Anderson spent time meeting virtually, purchasing/lining-up field survey equipment, PPE, and training two leads in order to have all emergence and a portion of reconnaissance bat surveys done via volunteer efforts in collaboration with volunteers at Bats Northwest, Woodland Park Zoo, and the general public. Remaining recon sites that were not quite a fit for a volunteer effort will be attempted by District 12 staff members as time allows this summer.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

A bird called a little stint made an appearance at Leque Island and drew a lot of interest from bird watchers. Little stints are very uncommon in Washington, with only eight confirmed sightings on record

Spring Bear Checks: District Biologists Hamer and C. Moore checked three bears harvested during the spring bear permit season. Premolars were collected from each bear and harvest information was submitted for documentation.

Bird Dog Training Event: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the Washington Brittany Club field trial event was held at the Stillwater Wildlife Unit over Memorial Day weekend. The walking field trial course was spread out across most of the fields and reports back from the Club say all went well.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Emergency Nest Take: Biologist Anderson has been working with the Diversity Division to provide appropriate permits and guidance to entities such as Puget Sound Energy, Verizon, Seattle City Light, and related public utility infrastructure managers that have had largely nesting osprey set-up on structures that are prone to fire or collapse (underweight) of nests. Luckily, in all situations the birds had no eggs and a programmatic permit was provided, along with guidance to not disturb birds. Larger entities have now either gained or are in the process of requesting annual permitting for these needs. This will help one-off permits during the nesting season be avoided and the infrastructure manager can just appropriately move on obvious safety situations, keep in contact, and report at the end of year.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Ebey Island Peatland: Researchers from the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR) and Colorado State University initiated a field study that is part of WDFW's Ebey Island Planning Project. A portion of the Ebey Island Unit is suspected to be a rare bog-like habitat and the study will characterize it and inform WDFW's future management of the site. After visiting the site and taking soil and water samples, the team confirmed that there is a deep layer of peat and a high water table (which is consistent with a bog), but the type of peat and the water chemistry do not suggest it is the type of bog they initially suspected. It is, however, a very large peatland and may be the largest of its type in the state. They installed wells and will continue to collect data for nine months that will make them more confident in their findings.

The vegetation at the center of the peatland is dense shrubs, mostly Myrica gale – Photo from WA DNR

This is a sediment core from the peatland, which shows a mineral layer that was deposited between layers of peat. The mineral layer is potentially a tsunami deposit from long ago – Photo from WA DNR

This is a sedge sheath found in the peat that is likely over 500 to thousands of years old – Photo from WA DNR

5) <u>Providing Education and Outreach</u>

Leque Island Film and Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat staff members Lindsey Desmul and Seth Ballhorn joined a video production company and Skagit River Systems Cooperative fish monitoring staff members at Leque Island to capture footage for a short film they are producing about the project.

Staff members seining a channel at Leque Island to capture fish

Skagit River Systems Cooperative staff members counting and measuring fish at Leque Island

Western sandpipers hanging out on a log in a Leque Island channel

Media Collaborations: Biologist Anderson was interviewed by Q13 news staff members regarding living with bear, cougar, and just generally what to do around wildlife. Anderson was also interviewed regarding coyote in West Seattle by KIRO radio. Anderson is in ongoing efforts in providing review/input and interview to Woodland Park Zoo media staff members regarding pollinator outreach (yet to come out). Anderson has also been working with Public Affairs, Habitat, Science, and Diversity biologists regarding ongoing outreach efforts in amphibians – mainly non-native and why not to drop pet amphibians and reptiles in nature.

Also, a piece on citizen assistance and monitoring efforts to keep tabs and increase our occurrence knowledge of area amphibians (involving the Woodland Park Zoo amphibian monitoring program and data available to managing entities such as WDFW). Biologists Anderson, Moore, Waddell, and others in Public Affairs at WDFW are working with a graphic design intern that is putting together a comic-type media piece regarding outreach on keeping wildlife wild and living with them – not creating issues with individual animals via feeding, habituation, etc. It is a fun project and reiterates that with some of us, stick figures are not always the best route to go...

City Nature Challenge: Biologist Anderson participated in the City Nature Challenge, having two marbled murrelets along the Everett waterfront right by a dog park! Anderson helped curate a portion of observations via Woodland Park Zoo coordinated City Nature Challenge on an iNaturalist platform. The effort went well, and it was great to see so many dedicated folks turn out to document their wildlife watching and observation efforts!

Male Spotted Towhee – a common backyard bird. Keep cats indoors to help ground nesting birds!

Common raven at nest feeding young and then after feeding (why are you taking my picture of me and my babies?) – soon to be more common in lowland suburbia greater Seattle, perhaps? More are being documented annually by wildlife watchers. Crows are not happy with sharing the pie they once had control over – Photos by C. Anderson (WDFW)

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Cherry Valley Upgrades: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the hazard tree removal project continued this past month. Approximately 15 trees were either removed or trimmed. The trees were growing over a pedestrian walkway and towards State Highway 203 resulting is a growing safety hazard.

Cherry Valley Hazard Tree Removal, May 2021

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the two south parking lots were graded and re-graveled this month. Potholes were ground out and gravel was packed on the parking lots to provide a much-needed improvement to this busy parking lot.

Crescent Lake South parking lots get a make-over in May 2021

Volunteer Opportunity: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with two Master Hunters on a trailer restoration project. An old (circa 1985) WDFW trailer was looking pretty worn and needed some electrical repairs. Two Master Hunter volunteers replaced the lights and electrical wiring, the outside plywood and gave it a new paint job. Good for another 35 years. The trailer is used to haul pheasant crates, a water tank and small powered equipment.

Before ***After***

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Pearson Airfield Streaked-horned Lark Habitat Assessment: Biologist Stephens visited the Pearson Field Airport to assess it for suitable streaked-horned lark habitat. The streaked-horned lark is a small songbird endemic to the Pacific Northwest and listed as threatened in Washington. The habitat at the airport was deemed to be unsuitable for streaked-horned larks given the dense ground cover. Streaked-horned larks prefer a fair amount of bare ground when selecting nesting areas.

Vegetation adjacent to runway at Pearson Field Airport

Fawn Transport to Wildlife Rehab: Biologist Stephens transported a recently born fawn to Grand Mound, where a volunteer met her and transported the fawn to A Soft Place to Land, a wildlife rehabber in Graham. This fawn was brought to Battle Ground Lake State Park over the weekend and given to a volunteer without explanation, so it is unknown if the fawn was truly abandoned and in need of rescue or if it was taken unnecessarily. The public is reminded that it is completely normal for young fawns to rest alone and is not a cause for action if a fawn is located without a doe in sight. Please do not pick up fawns or any other young wildlife unless you know for sure that its mother is not alive.

Healthy fawn being transported to a wildlife rehabber

Western Pond Turtle Reproduction Study: In 2018, as part of a Competitive State Wildlife Grant, District 9 biologists were tasked with tracking 30 female Western pond turtles to their nests and recording hatch rate (number of eggs laid versus number of eggs hatched) to determine if shell disease affects reproduction. Over the two previous field seasons, the team has recorded 17 nests and learned that finding turtle nests is really hard! In this final field season of the project, we hope to find at least 13 nests to reach our goal of 30. Over the past four weeks, Biologists Wickhem and Bergh and Technicians Leipold and Schiltz have been trapping for turtles at a site in the Eastern Columbia Gorge with the aim of catching reproductive females.

After capture, the females were taken to the VCA Animal Clinic in Clackamas, *or* where they received CT scans. The scans are the best way to assess the turtles for shell disease (a novel disease that causes shell lesions) and also confirm if the females are gravid (carrying eggs). All females with eggs were fitted with radio-transmitters that will allow the team to follow the females to their nests; a total of 20 transmitters were deployed. Several other turtles were also retained and CT scanned throughout the month as part of ongoing investigations into shell disease. All turtles were released back into their respective ponds after scanning. The team immediately started tracking all females with radiotelemetry and looks forward to finding the first nest of the season!

One highlight of the trapping effort was that the team captured and marked 31 young, wild-born turtles, not counting the several captured and observed hatchlings that were too small to mark! Only a few years ago, finding this many wild-born turtles in only a few weeks seemed impossible. The increase in wild-born turtles is an encouraging sign that recent bullfrog removal efforts at the site have led to increased hatchling survival.

Technician Leipold measures a Western pond turtle after capture

Volunteer Downing releases a turtle back into the pond after her CT scan

Biologist Wickhem monitoring reproductive females while the epoxy dries on their transmitters

A reproductive female after receiving her transmitter
She is wrapped so she cannot move around within the CT machine

Klickitat Mule Deer Mortality Investigations: From January to March 2021, staff members and contractors deployed 81 GPS collars on mule deer does in GMUs 388 and 382 of Eastern Klickitat County. The project is part of Secretarial Order 3362, funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior to identify migration corridors of ungulate populations in Eastern Washington.

This week, Biologist Wickhem responded to two mortality signals sent out by these mule deer radio-collars. These notifications are sent via email when a collar has not moved for at least nine hours, indicating the animal has likely died. The first deer was quickly found thanks to the help of a local landowner. Unfortunately, it had already been extensively scavenged by coyotes and vultures making it impossible to determine the cause of death. However, the collar was retrieved, and teeth were collected so the animal could be aged. The second deer of the week sent a mortality signal and then stopped sending GPS locations for several days. Biologist Wickhem visited the area of her last points and was able to use radiotelemetry to track down the deer and see that she was alive and well. Apparently, her collar was temporarily malfunctioning and has since started logging points again. Discovering that your “dead” study animal is actually still alive is always a welcome surprise!

The remains of deer 389, next to her GPS collar

Collared Deer Mortality: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen invested a mortality event of a deer with a WDFW satellite GPS-collar in Klickitat County. The deer was found alongside Highway 14 near Horsethief Lake in Klickitat County. The deer had clearly died due to a collision with a vehicle. Jacobsen determined that the doe was lactating but could not locate the fawn in the area. This deer was one of 81 mule deer collared east-central Klickitat County as part of a multi-year study on deer movements, migration patterns, and survival.

Deceased deer with satellite GPS collar, killed by a vehicle collision

Checks of Hunter Killed Wildlife: Spring is typically a slow period for Regional Wildlife Biologists, Conflict Specialists, Customer Service staff members, and Enforcement Officers involved with checks of hunter killed wildlife. However, the new requirement for hunters harvesting bears on spring permits has generated several checks within Region 5. For bears, the checking requirement allows for inspection of the animal's sex as well as reproductive status and for collection of a tooth for ageing. Thanks to the successful hunters for bringing their animals into WDFW for the various checking requirements and for sharing their photos.

Young adult female black bear harvested in GMU 684 (Long Beach)

Spring black bear harvested in southeast Washington

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Access Program Landowner Visits: Private Lands Biologist Ferris visited with several Private Lands Access Program enrolled landowners across the region to discuss program satisfaction and the annual incentive payment. The Access Program has funds available for the next two years to provide a payment to new landowners enrolling in the program in exchange for allowing controlled, public hunting access with flexible options available.

The border of a property enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program in Klickitat County

Access Program Property Visits in Wahkiakum County: Private Lands Biologist Ferris visited the Private Lands Access Program properties owned by Columbia Land Trust for maintenance. Ferris discovered one of the visitor/hunter registration kiosks was completely removed and stolen. The entire board and accompanying signage, registration box, and slips were removed. Only the post remained in the ground. Stealing property from the landowner or the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is illegal and a punishable crime.

The support post was the only item left standing of the hunter registration kiosk at this access site

Access Maintenance: WDFW's Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) worked on grading and graveling some of the access sites including Barbers and Vancouver Lake access. Due to the increase in use of the access sites, more restroom vaults had to be pumped out in Klickitat county. Access staff members also worked on more grass and brush cutting along with more herbicide treatment for Knotweed.

Grading at Barbers Access and Vancouver Lake

Access Sites: This week Access staff members continued mowing and cutting grass and brush at multiple access sites. The sunny weather along with the small amounts of rain have put grasses and brush in high growing gear. Last week there was a break from trash but this week it was back. The Department of Ecology helped with hauling away trash on Clark and Cowlitz county access sites. Barbers Access and restrooms were sadly back to a substantial amount of abuse. Someone had a sense of humor at Barbers access putting together a "rock baby" for staff members to find.

Barbers Access and restroom with "rock baby"

3) <u>Providing Conflict Prevention and Education</u>

Bear Encounter: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of a yearling bear cub running around on a landowner's property in Klickitat County. Among other things, the young bear approached the landowner's sheep close enough for one of the sheep to head-butt the bear. The bear appeared naïve and did not want to leave the premises, but finally vacated the area prior to Jacobsen's arrival. Jacobsen provided advice and suggested that the landowner work to improve his current livestock structure, as he lived in ideal bear and cougar habitat. Jacobsen inspected another potential structure on-site where, with a little fencing help, the landowner could construct a first-rate pen for his sheep. Jacobsen will look for possible fencing material supplies and help the landowner construct an official pen for his livestock in the near future.

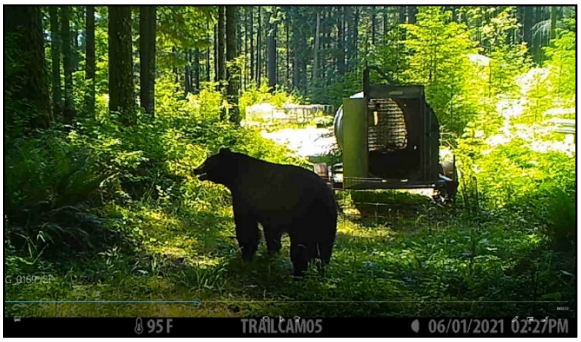
Current livestock pen in need of improvement. Sheep in the pen head-butted the curious bear when it came too close

Bear in Pear Bins: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a landowner who had repeatedly observed a bear getting into his pig feed. Upon arriving at the residence, Jacobsen noticed that the "pig feed" turned out to consist of seven large bins of slightly rotten pear culls from a local orchard. The pears made a tasty snack for bears during this dry time of year where natural food is extremely scarce. Jacobsen originally planned on helping the landowner construct a portable electric fence around the pear bins, but due to the rocky substrate and dry conditions, the plan was abandoned. The landowner instead decided to dump the pears and bury them with his tractor to remove as much of the temptation as possible.

Pear bins that had been frequented by a bear/bears

Bear Mischief: Over the past three weeks, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen has been working with a landowner in Skamania County that has experienced continuous mischief caused by multiple bears. Despite having all food attractants removed and/or secured from the site, the landowner has documented the bears getting into just about everything, including ripping a door off of a shed and attempting to break into a goat barn. Jacobsen set a trap for the bears and so far, has caught one of the three or four bears that have been causing the problems. The other bears have enjoyed playing with the bear trap and finding ways to escape from the trap without getting caught. The bear that was caught was tranquilized, ear-tagged, and relocated in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Jacobsen will continue to monitor the situation and will hopefully be able to catch the remaining bears responsible for the mayhem.

Goat barn where a bear attempted to break into it



One of the many bears visiting the site. This bear declined to enter the trap on the day the video was taken


Immobilized black bear in the bear trap (left) and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker with the immobilized and ear-tagged bear (right)

Deer Damage to Vineyard: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner who was complaining about deer damage to the vineyard he managed in Skamania County. Jacobsen toured the vineyard and documented the extensive deer browse on the grape leaves. The vineyard is adjacent to ideal deer and elk habitat and will prove a difficult situation to deter deer from. While inspecting the damage, two male deer entered the vineyard to begin their afternoon browsing. Jacobsen and the vineyard manager attempted to haze the deer off, but they were used to the hazing and ducked between rows to escape. In the end, they only trotted a few dozen yards off. Jacobsen will work to enter the landowner in a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement and will continue to explore hazing and fencing options for the landowner.

Extensive deer browse to wine grape leaves

Buck fleeing between rows in the vineyard after being hazed by Jacobsen and the manager

Cougar Sighting/Depredation on Goat: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a landowner in Klickitat County who reported that he had killed a cougar in the act of attacking his goat in the early morning hours that day.

The landowner had heard the commotion around 4:45 in the morning, discovered something attacking the goat, and went back to the house to get his .22 rifle. The landowner came back outside and dispatched the cougar. The goat had been chained up outside that night near the landowner's yard. Jacobsen arrived at the residence to find the deceased cougar still attached to the goat by its claws. The cougar initially appeared to be an emaciated juvenile cat, given its size and stature, but further inspection revealed that the cougar was an adult female that was well-advanced in years and was likely starving at the time of the incident. Both of its top canines were broken in half/worn down, and most of its incisor teeth were missing. Jacobsen thanked the landowner for reporting the incident and provided advice on penning livestock at night if the landowner were to obtain any more goats in the future.

A few days later, Jacobsen received an old report of an unusual cougar sighting from a landowner that had occurred on the same night/morning as the goat incident and less than half a mile to the east. The landowner came outside to discover a fairly small cougar curled up at the base of a tree near their porch. Jacobsen deduced that the cougar from both incidents was likely the same animal.

Emaciated, adult female cougar killed during a depredation on a goat

Worn and yellowed canine teeth, with incisors missing, on the deceased cougar. These signs indicate that the cougar was of an advanced age

Cougar curled up at the base of a pine tree near a porch

Orphaned Fawns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received a report of a doe that had been killed by a vehicle, leaving behind two newborn fawns on the side of the road. The reporting party had already captured the fawns and had them housed in a dog crate for the time being. Jacobsen coordinated with Hunter Education Coordinator Elliot and the WDFW Master Hunter program to arrange for a Master Hunter volunteer to transport the fawns from Washougal (Clark County) to the closest wildlife rehabilitation center in Graham (Pierce County). A special thank you to Master Hunter Reeves and A Soft Place to Land wildlife rehab center for helping to take care of these fawns!

Bears in Vineyard: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a vineyard manager in Klickitat County to discuss recent bear sightings in the vineyard. Jacobsen provided advice on living in bear country and discussed bear biology and behavior with several vineyard employees as well as with the vineyard owner. Every year, the vineyard experiences issues with bears causing damage to their grape crop as well as their cherry trees. Electric fencing options were discussed, but the landowner and manager were not interested in implementing electric fencing. They inquired about permits to remove bears off their property outside of regular hunting seasons. Jacobsen discussed fall public hunting options with the landowner and offered to connect licensed general season bear hunters with the vineyard when bear season opened in August.

Idle Bear: A concerned Skamania County landowner contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen about a bear that had been frequenting their yard. They described the bear sitting fairly close to people in their yard for several hours at a time, repeatedly scratching itself. The landowner believed the bear may have mange and thought the bear was in overall poor body condition. Jacobsen requested that the landowner contact him again if the bear returned to hang out in the yard.

Bear that has been lounging in the landowner's yard on multiple occasions – Photo taken by the landowner

Deer with Injured Leg: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a Skamania County landowner who had observed a deer in her yard with what she believed was a rope or belt wrapped around the deer's leg. The landowner had observed this deer with the injury three or four times over the past 8 months. WDFW staff members have still not been able to visually locate or inspect the deer, but at this point any damaged caused by the rope or belt to the deer would likely be permanent and additional rescue efforts would be ineffective.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner in Skamania County who had been incurring elk damage to his hay crops. Bird Banger explosive hazing devices were issued to the landowner to assist with moving the elk out of the pasture.

Deer Damage to Garden: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen provided advice over the phone to a landowner who was concerned about deer getting into his garden. Jacobsen advised the landowner to increase the height of his existing 6-foot garden fence to a height of at least 8 feet to keep deer out.

Missing Cows: A Skamania County landowner contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen to report a dead adult angus cow and another missing. The cows had been free ranging on a heavily timbered property that was over 200 aces in size. The first cow was found deceased by the landowner approximately one week after it went missing, and by the time the carcass was discovered, it had been heavily scavenged by a bear and other animals. The landowners eventually contacted Jacobsen five days after the second cow went missing; however, on the day that Jacobsen arrived to help search for the cow and to attempt a necropsy on the first cow carcass, the landowners found the missing angus cow alive but unable to get up. Jacobsen inspected the sick/wounded cow but did not observe any signs of an attempted depredation or attack. It was unclear why the cow had been unable to get up for the past five days, but it was likely that the landowner was going to have to euthanize the cow at this point due to its condition. Jacobsen was unable to determine the cause of death of the first cow due to the advanced scavenging and decomposition of the carcass. One of the landowners was convinced that the state of both cows was the result of depredations/attempted depredations by a bear or cougar, but Jacobsen detected no evidence to suggest that either animal had been depredated on.

"Missing"/found cow that had been unable to get up for the past five days

Sheep Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey was contacted by a livestock owner who had lost a sheep the previous night. There was little left to inspect on the carcass because of the secondary feeding that had already occurred, but other evidence at the site of the kill suggested that it was likely coyotes that caused the sheep's death. Husbandry practices and coyote deterrent were discussed with the livestock owner to prevent further issues with sheep loss.

Fence Repair: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with and delivered a small amount of patch fencing material to a landowner who had lost multiple sheep in the previous month. There was one location of fence where animals were frequently digging and crossing under to get into the sheep and goat pasture. The landowner was advised that it would probably take more fence than what was available to make entry into the pasture more difficult in the long term. Husbandry practices, particularly at night, were discussed.

Owl in Chicken Coop: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a call of a great horned owl that had gotten into a large barn with many smaller chicken coops inside. The barn only had one small area where goats were able to come and go that the owl could have used to get in. Aubrey was able to capture the owl and released it nearby after confirming that there were no injuries to the animal.

Great horned owl captured in barn before release

Sick Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of a sick deer in a residential yard. The deer had already expired before Aubrey arrived. The carcass was removed from the yard. It was likely that the deer was suffering from acidosis, a condition commonly associated with eating an unnatural food source, generally people feeding wildlife.

Cougar Sighting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a group of homeowners who had recently spotted a cougar near their residences. The cougar was reportedly feeding on a deer carcass. Aubrey searched for a carcass but was unable to locate anything. Cougar safety measures were discussed and living in cougar country pamphlets were left for the neighbors to distribute.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Sampling of Herbaceous Vegetation at Exclosures: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven worked with Range Ecologist Burnham to record abundance and diversity of herbaceous plants in the exclosures on the North Breaks Road pasture and the Sheep Canyon Road pasture. This is part of a long-term study to see how grazing by cattle, elk, and deer affect the native plant community. The exclosures were constructed in 2003.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Memorial Day Weekend: Anticipating a busy weekend of recreation on the Klickitat Wildlife Area, Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven worked in the field to meet with campers, turkey hunters, boaters, and fishermen to provide information and ensure compliance with rules. Several people requested maps of the wildlife area, and many people had questions about the ban on campfires (which is now in effect) as well as a range of other topics. Almost everyone had Vehicle Access Passes or Discover Passes in their vehicles. More than one camp indicated that they were expecting to be checked, as VanLeuven has a tradition of visiting the campgrounds on this weekend every year. Leidl Park Campground was much fuller than usual with every spot being taken. Some people found that the campgrounds were so full that they set up camp elsewhere on the wildlife area, along roads away from the river. Clear skies afforded nice views, so the roadside campsites were also mostly occupied.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Roads: WDFW's Road Maintenance Crew graded roads at Stinson Flat, Leidl Park, and Mineral Springs Campgrounds this week. They also added rock to fill potholes and improve the road surface in areas that receive the most traffic. The Road Maintenance Crew also added rock and graded a rough stretch of the South Breaks Road on the Soda Springs Unit.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Seasonal Ban on Campfires in Effect: WDFW initiated the seasonal ban on open fires on May 15 on agency-managed lands. Historically campfires have been allowed in the campgrounds along the Klickitat River later into the summer, but his year Klickitat County put a burn ban in place for central Klickitat County on the same day, May 15, due to drier than normal conditions. Campfires will be allowed again at the campgrounds along the river when the county lifts their outdoor fire restriction on September 30. In the upland areas outside of these campgrounds, WDFW will lift its ban on campfires on November 1. The Simcoe Mountains Unit, which is in east Klickitat County, has been under a burn ban since the county's ordinance took effect on May 1, and will be in place until November 1.

Grazing Permit Monitoring: Despite an extremely limited water supply for cattle, grazing management on the Soda Springs Unit has gone well. The scant growth of forage has forced the animals to move around so that unusually heavy impacts have not been observed. The grazing permit holder has been hauling water to temporary troughs daily. The placement of the troughs, salt blocks, and distribution of grass seems to have had the effect of spreading out the grazing activity over area. So far, the cattle have not shown much interest in wildflowers (forbs) even in areas that they travel through to reach water sources.

Columbia Frasera along Grayback Road

Property Boundary Fence Reconstruction: Reconstruction of a dilapidated (and in some places missing) fence on the boundary of the Soda Springs Unit is nearing completion. The 0.7-mile-long project has been progressing intermittently as Wildlife Area staff members fit the work around other tasks.

Property Boundary Fence on Soda Springs Unit

5) <u>Providing Education and Outreach</u>

Nothing for this installment.

6) <u>Conducting Business Operations and Policy</u>

Nothing for this installment.

7) <u>Other</u>

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 6

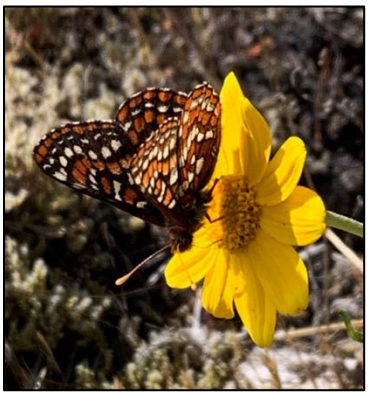
HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Taylors Checkerspot Butterfly Surveys: Biologists McMillan and Ament from District 16, Biologist Murphie from District 15, and Habitat Biologist Gary Bell all conducted numerous surveys for Taylor's Checkerspot butterflies at two known populations west of Port Angeles last month. Specific survey routes have been established at each known population site. The goal was to complete at least three surveys of each designated survey route during the peak flight period for this Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species. Unfortunately, a period of cool, cloudy weather occurred directly after the first round of surveys in April. Weather forecasts were monitored closely and there were very minimal suitable survey days in the month of May. The survey team was able to coordinate schedules to conduct surveys to meet protocols. There was one day where three observers were on site but they had to abort survey plans due to cloud cover that moved in. This is the third year that Taylor's Checkerspots were surveyed at the two locations using the distance sampling method with a point survey design. The first year in 2018 was considered a pilot year for this method. Some adjustments to points and additions of points were completed prior to initiating surveys this season. The survey numbers for the 2021 appear to be lower than numbers for the previous two seasons. The table below summarizes the survey effort for the 2021 season:

Taylor's Checkerspot Surveys	Eden Valley Site TOTAL	EV-Upper	EV-U2s	EV-Lower	DK - CNLM West	DK - Jenny	DK - Parallel	DK - Ridge Road TOTAL	Ridge Road - A1	Ridge Road - B	Ridge Road - C	Ridge Road - D	DK - Lower East Road	DK - Lower East F Route
4/19/2021					113	46	26	1	1	0	0	0	5	
4/20/2021	34	30		4										
5/11/2021	>62	61	1		121	22	17	7					4	
5/14/2021	64	54		10										
5/20/2021	35	29	0	6		14								
5/21/2021					65	23	2	6	0	2	2	2	4	4

Anita = Purple Bryan = Red Gary = Blue Shelly = Green



Taylor's checkerspot butterfly nectaring on OR Sunshine (Eriophyllum lanalum)

Taylor's Checkerspot Searches and Habitat Review: Biologist Ament conducted a Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly search effort along the Adventure Route of the Olympic Discovery Trail west of Port Angeles. The previous Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Biologist for the Olympic Region had reported observing a few documented Taylor's Checkerspots (TCs) along this trail a few years ago. Several species of butterflies and moths were located but no TCs were observed. After conducting a survey on May 21, 2021, she also spent some time reviewing habitat where an improvement project was conducted two years ago. Trees and shrubs were cleared in a small area adjacent to a steep slope where a few new survey points were established this season. Some host plant seed was distributed at this site in the past. Bull thistle was noted in the clearing and will need to be controlled. One TC was observed in the landing adjacent to this new clearing.

Recently cleared habitat improvement site near slope with known TC butterflies

New survey route west of clearing

Milbert's Tortoiseshell Butterfly

Nice view location encountered along Adventure Trail during TC search

Band-Tailed Pigeon Project: District Biologist Novack, Assistant District Biologist Michaelis, and Waterfowl Section Manager Spragens conducted another two days of trapping for band-tailed pigeons in Grays Harbor County. Six birds were fitted with GPS transmitters for the purpose of tracking their movements. This brings the total number of birds fitted with transmitters to nine. The primary goal of this effort is to identify the locations of mineral sites used by band-tailed pigeons during the breeding season. These mineral sites appear to be a key resource for band-tails in Western Washington. Mineral sites are surveyed during early July to provide WDFW with a general index to how overall population is doing. A final trapping session will occur next month.

Figure 1: Band-tailed pigeon captured by WDFW and fitted with a transmitter near Elma, WA in May 2021

Breeding Window Snowy Plover Surveys: The annual range-wide breeding window snowy plover surveys, scheduled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for all states (Washington, Oregon, California) for the week of May 16 through 22, 2021 were completed at all assigned beaches in Washington. Biologist Sundstrom, along with other district wildlife biologists, scheduled and coordinated survey efforts with WDFW, USFWS, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, and Washington State Parks staff members to complete the assigned survey locations. Areas surveyed were: Leadbetter Point (Long Beach), Midway Beach (Grayland), Graveyard Spit (Tokeland), Ocean Shores to Ocean City, Connor Creek (Ocean City), Copalis Spit (Copalis), and Oyhut Spit (Ocean Shores).

Ninety-two (92) breeding adult snowy plovers were found at five (5) beach locations in 2021.

Adult Snowy Plover Breeding Window Surveys – Washington State

Washington	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	45	43	64	106	84	81	98	47*	92

* COVID restrictions in place; 2 major plover locations not surveyed (Leadbetter/Long Beach and Graveyard Spit)

White-nose Surveillance: Biologist Murphie assisted Biologist Tobin and student Colley in capturing 23 bats from a colony located in the Hamma Hamma area. Samples were collected to test for white-nose syndrome at this site.

Beller's and Hatch's Click Beetles: Biologist Murphie conducted searches for these beetles at three locations in District 15. A possible Hatch's was collected from one pond near Shelton, several Beller's were collected from another pond near Lake Cushman, and the third lake had little habitat where neither target species were found.

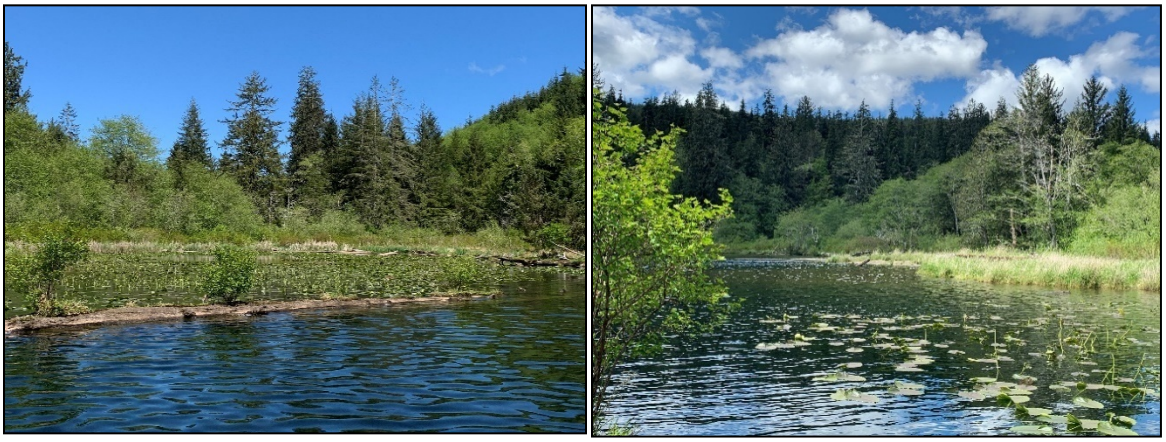
Common Loon: Biologist Murphie visited several lakes in District 15 looking for nesting common loons during this period. So far, his search has been unsuccessful, but it is early in the season. After Biologist Tirhi conducted loon surveys in Dupont, Lake Tanwax, Lake Byron, and Twin Lakes, no loons were seen or heard. Biologist Butler will be doing the second and final survey at each of these locations in June per the protocol. Tanwax has quality platforms for loons to nest and abundant secluded locations but regardless, Tirhi found no loons during thorough shoreline trawling surveys.

Example of potential loon nesting platforms on Tanwax Lake, Pierce County

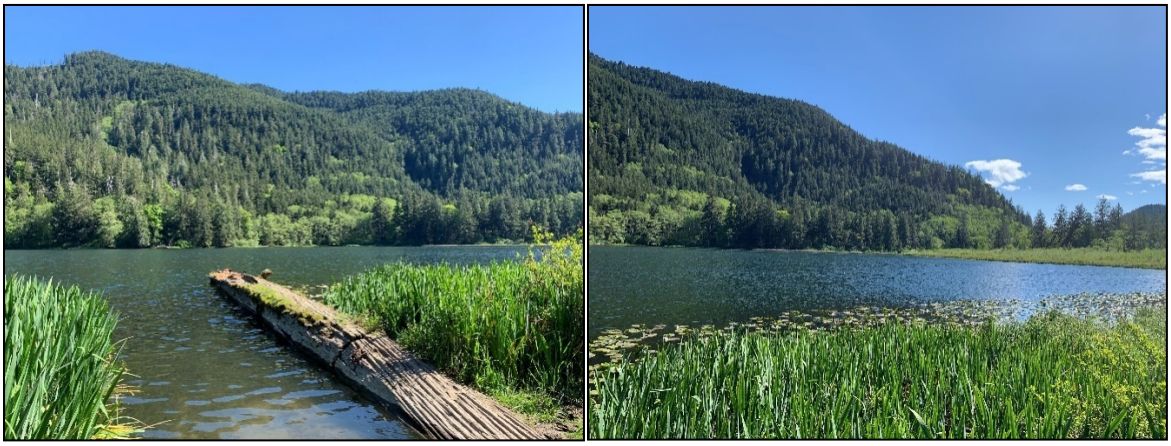
While Biologist Tirhi failed to find any loons nesting on Lake Tanwax, she did come around a corner and surprise three yearling deer cooling off in the lake

Common Loon Breeding Surveys: Several search efforts of lakes were conducted last month to determine if there may be any breeding pairs of common loons present:

May 13, 2021 – Lake Pleasant and Beaver Lake: Biologist Ament was fortunate to have Biologist Michaelis assist with a boat he borrowed from the Regional Office. They conducted a complete survey of Lake Pleasant and Beaver Lake in western Clallam County. Lake Pleasant is a 493-acre lake about 8 miles northeast of Forks. There are numerous residences on the lake but portions of the northern part of the lake are more secluded with potential loon nesting habitat. Retired DNR Biologist Scott Horton has told Biologist Ament that he had a report of adult loons with chicks on this lake in the past. Unfortunately, no loons were heard or observed on the lake during the survey. Ament hopes to seek access and landowner permission for searching the north area of this lake by kayak later this season. After surveying with the boat at Lake Pleasant, Biologists Ament and Michaelis conducted a site visit Beaver Lake. They scanned the entire lake with binoculars and a spotting scope from the shoreline. This smaller lake alongside Highway 113 does not have the most suitable loon nesting habitat and there could be disturbance issues with vehicle traffic. No loons were heard or observed at this lake.



Views of the north end of Lake Pleasant that had the most suitable loon habitat



Views of Beaver Lake along Highway 113

May 14, 2021 – Lake Ozette: Region 6 Biologists Michaelis, McMillan, Ament, along with volunteers Mike Langley and Lynne Roberson, teamed up on May 14, 2021 to conduct a loon survey at Lake Ozette. This lake is located within the northern boundary of Olympic National Park and is the largest unaltered natural lake in Washington at 2,954 hectares. It is eight miles long and three miles wide. Adult loons have been observed and heard vocalizing on the lake in past years. Retired DNR Biologist Scott Horton reported that he observed "two good-sized fledglings" on the lake in late July of 2015. Loon pairs and lone loons have been observed during past WDFW survey efforts at this lake. A motorboat captained by Biologist Michaelis was used to conduct the survey of the entire lake. Biologist McMillan and volunteer Langley served as observers on the boat. They attempted to use an inflatable kayak and focused spending their time at the south end of the lake. Biologist Ament and volunteer Lynne Roberson used kayaks to survey separate areas at the north end of the lake. The survey teams had suitable weather – mostly cloudy most of the day until the sun came out in the late afternoon. Fortunately, there were light winds during the day. Radios were used to report loon observations and keep track of specific loons. A total of two distinct loon pairs were observed on the lake and at least three lone loons were observed during the survey effort. Binoculars were used to confirm that all loons observed were adult birds. No younger loons were documented.
District 16 biologists certainly appreciated the provided boat and participation from Biologist's Michaelis and dedicated volunteers. Further surveys of this lake are planned for June and July.

Goose family observed at Lake Ozette

Clouds finally cleared in the afternoon

Biologists Tirhi and Michaelis also completed the first of two surveys of Kapowsin, Ohop and Alder lakes in Pierce County. Loons were neither seen nor heard. The team found no loons during thorough shoreline troling surveys despite abundant nesting platform availability.

Streaked Horned Lark: Biologists Butler and Tirhi completed the second and final survey for larks on McNeil Island. Although the team did not find any larks on the island, they are excited to discuss the potential to create more lark habitat and lure larks to the island in the future. This will be discussed in the formation of the updated South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Management Plan.

Bumble Bee Training: Biologists McMillan and Ament participated in the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas Training Sessions held last month. They have been assigned to conduct surveys of Graves Grid cells for the western bumble bee in their district so this training was helpful in preparation for planned surveys.

Topics Covered in the Training:

Module 1 – Bumble Bee Ecology and Conservation – With insights and results from the first three years of the project.
Module 2 – Species of Greatest Conservation Need – Learning more about rare species.
Module 3 – How to participate (from Grid Adoption to Data Submission)
Module 4 – Photography and ID Tips.

Bats and White Nose Syndrome: Biologists Tirhi and Tobin collaborated with staff members from Northwest Trek, Pierce County, to trap (net) bats from two locations and swab them for the presence of the fungal agent for white nose syndrome *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*. Swabs were collected from 25 little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) and sent to Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for analysis. Thankfully, the results were negative.
WDFW greatly appreciates the partnership with Tacoma Metro Park's Northwest Trek in monitoring the health of such an important species, bats. Northwest Trek secured a grant to pay for staff members to assist with sample collection and lab analysis costs.

Biologist Tirhi setting funnel trap for bats

Staff member swabbing bat wing for presence of the a little fungal agent* Pseudogymnoascus destructans *that causes White Nose Syndrome in bats

Biologists taking swab sample of brown bat

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi completed two weekly shifts monitoring nesting pond turtles at the Pierce County recovery site. No female turtles were found out of the water nesting during either nine-hour monitoring shift.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Water Access Site Maintenance: With the warmer weather and ongoing trout and kokanee plants, local lakes are receiving very high usage. The access team has given extra attention to Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, and Thurston County lakes. The access team has continued working with the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) monofilament recycling crew. The WCC crew has been exceptionally helpful this spring, performing vegetation management and litter collection.

North Bay Danger Tree Removal: Several dangerous trees were removed with the help from Fred Holmes Tree Service. Several Poplar trees were taken out. These trees were severly rotten and posed an immediate threat to persons and vehicles using this site.

Kitsap Lake Road Repair: Access team members Freimund and Mettler repaired three potholes at the Kitsap Lake water access site using cold patch asphalt. This small job took ten bags of cold patch (500 pounds) to repair the driveway preventing damage to trucks and trailers turning this corner.

Misery Point: The access team performed work at the Misery Point access site preparing for the upcoming shrimp opener. It is not uncommon to see over one hundred vehicles per day during the shrimping season.


Bogachiel River Thomas: Work has continued at the Bogachiel River Thomas water access site. Reeves met with the Clallam County road maintenance supervisor to strategize the parking lot improvements and layout.

Johns River Adopt an Access: A new group has adopted the Johns River Access Site in Grays Harbor County. Mitchell and Reeves have spent time training the group making sure work is being performed safely. This group is not only taking on the water access site, but also the north tract of the Johns River Wildlife Unit and trailhead. With the help of the Olympic Wildlife Area staff members, Gallegos and Vanblaricom, over 700 pounds of trash, tires, microwaves, and more have been removed out of these areas.

Private Lands: Biologist Sundstrom spent several days checking on popular ‘dump locations’ on private timberland areas and assisted in dump run removal of an abandoned travel trailer near Humptulips. Garbage continues to be found at most locations visited.

Kitsap Lake Boat Removal: The access team retrieved a derelict and nearly sunken vessel at Kitsap Lake. The boat was trailered from the site with preparations made to remove any remaining contaminants and recyclable materials before being taken for disposal.

Kitsap Lake derelict boat

Long Lake Kitsap County Abandoned Vessel: The access staff members with the help of Enforcement Officer Murray and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are working on removal of another abandoned vessel at Long Lake Kitsap County.

Long Lake abandoned vessel

Lake Sutherland: Team members Reeves and Walker performed road repair from winter weather and filled sinkholes at Lake Sutherland in addition to mowing, weed-eating and routine site maintenance.

Lake Sutherland winter cleanup

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Olympia Regional Airport Master Plan Update Technical Advisory Committee: Biologist Tirhi participated in the first of several technical committee meetings for this plan update. Tirhi was requested to participate on the committee by the Port of Olympia. The Olympia Airport is occupied or seasonally used by three listed prairie species: Mazama pocket gopher, streaked horned lark, and Oregon vesper sparrow.

Osprey Rescue: While returning from the loon survey on Lake Kapowsin, Tirhi spotted an osprey entangled in a fishing line on a floating platform. After returning to the truck for capture supplies, Biologist Michaelis skillfully navigated the boat to the platform providing Tirhi a smooth capture of the osprey with a hand-held net. While Tirhi held the osprey, Michaelis was able to cut the fishing line away which was entangled into both talons and body cavity and cutting into one talon. Once free of the line, Tirhi checked the osprey for health (crop was full) and the team decided to release the bird. It immediately circled the lake, connected with its partner, was chased by a pair of eagles, and life returned to normal. The biologists assume the osprey had only been entangled for the morning… and it was lucky two skilled biologists just happened to be boating by!

Biologist Tirhi holding rescued adult osprey just prior to release – Lake Kapowsin

Injured/Sick Wildlife Response: Biologist Ament responded to the following sick/injured wildlife reports this past month.

May 4 – cougar sightings at Robin Hill Park (see below)
May 6 – dead deer removal in Sequim
May 10 – injured deer near Olympic Game Farm in Sequim
May 11 – hound dogs chasing coyotes at Lower Dungeness
May 12 – another follow-up on injured deer at Game Farm
May 17 – deer caught in fence Port Angeles
May 20 – injured hawk west of Port Angeles
May 21 – GBH in fish pen at Elwha River Hatchery
May 25 – Deer fawn injured by WCC crew mowing field
May 27 – Doe with metal tomato plant cage around chest

Cougar Sightings at Robin Hill Park: Biologist Ament assisted regional conflict specialists by conducting a site visit to Robin Hill Park on May 4, 2021. This is a small Clallam County park located between Sequim and Port Angeles. A concerned citizen had contacted the regional office since she felt that WDFW was not taking enough action after a cougar was sighted at the park. Enforcement was aware of the reports, but no unusual or aggressive cougar behavior was reported. Biologist Ament shared some communications with Conflict Specialist Harris regarding the issue. He spoke with county park staff members and learned that some cougar warning signs were posted at the park. During her site visit, Biologist Ament made sure the signs were secure and spoke with several park recreational users. She did note that another great sign about not feeding wildlife was present at the park. (She wished that many county residents would follow the guidelines of that sign.) Some of the new cougar brochures were handed out to park users and some were left at the sign kiosks. She observed no cougars or sign of cougars during her evening hike throughout the park. No recent sightings have been reported.

Cougar warning sign and informative sign found at Robin Hill Park

Bear Management: Biologist Tirhi attended a two-and-a-half-day virtual training on bear trapping and handling presented by Dr. Mark Drew on behalf of the USFWS and Montana and Wyoming partners. The training was exceptional.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Soon to be Violet Prairie Unit: A partnering organization, The Conservation Fund (TCF), recently closed the purchase of a ranch near Tenino. TCF will hold the property until WDFW is able to purchase the land from them in phases over time. Throughout the project to this point, WDFW has collaborated with local governments and other organizations to make this a good fit for the community as well as wildlife. The area currently supports Mazama pocket gopher and represents potential Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly reintroduction habitat after intended restoration efforts take shape. Other open grasslands and a diverse mix of forest and wetlands can be found. The site which is expected to be extremely popular with the public will remain closed for a period of time until allowances can be made to accommodate users.

Recently a group of Regional Management Team and Lands Division staff members toured the site with Gates Watson of the conservation fund who was instrumental in the purchase negotiations. The photos below give a taste of the diversity on this landscape.


5) Providing Education and Outreach

General Wildlife Inquiries: Biologist Murphie responded to inquiries received by phone or email related to cougar, duck eggs underwater, and raven.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Tribal Coordination: Regional Director Phillips, Captain Chadwick, and Regional Program Manager Calkins met with representatives of the Skokomish Tribe to review hunting harvest data and discuss topics of mutual interest including the need to update the current co-management agreement language. One topic of focus in these annual discussions is access to private commercial timberland which is a concern of both parties. Following the meeting, the current agreement was renewed for another year with the intent to begin working on an updated version.

7) Other

New Olympic/Willapa Hills Wildlife Area: Nick Bechtold recently joined our Region 6 team as the new Olympic/Willapa Hills Wildlife Area Manager. Nick comes to us from Region 2 where he was an Assistant Manager on the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. Some of his primary tasks there included covering the grazing and fencing components of their management, in addition to many other activities. Prior to that, Nick held multiple positions supporting work on National Wildlife Refuges in Nevada as a Restoration Coordinator or Crew leader. His educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from St. Cloud State University in Minnesota where he grew up on a small farm and a Masters of Natural Resources from the University of Idaho.